

## TENANTS IN RUSSIA.

A SYSTEM BASED ON THE BONDAGE OF THE PEASANTS.

A remedy which is worse than the disease it is meant to cure—Interest—Figures—Tale of Misery and Suffering—Getting Even.

Russia is fast verging toward landlordism in the most pronounced form, and the peasantry are being divorced wholesale from the land which their fathers tilled, and by which they themselves can live. In another generation, at the present rate of progress for degradation, there will be on one side an agricultural proletariat of 60,000,000 or 70,000,000, on the other a class of koulaks and "big owners," holding all the land and virtually owning those by whom it is cultivated. The present system is based on the bondage of the peasants. Koulaks (usurers) and landlords lend their money, taking as security the hypochondria of the borrower's future labor, and once in debt the peasant is never free. He becomes the bond slave of his creditor, who exacts his pound of flesh with Shylock like ferocity.

GETTING EVEN.  
But the debtor, when his creditor is a landlord, has that simple yet effective way of getting himself. He works salable and as profitably as he knows how. The free laborer does twice as much and does it a great deal better, and for this evil there is a remedy except one that is worse than the disease it is meant to cure—a well paid over-charge for every bondman. For the peasant who is working off a debt does not get dismissed—wants it in fact, and the government allows no one to use the rod but itself. The koulak or local usurer is in a better position than the big landlord. A peasant himself, he works in the field with his bondman, and can see that they work. Being, moreover, a man of importance in the village, he is naturally more feared and better served than the absentee owner.

It is obvious that under these conditions agricultural progress and scientific farming are quite out of the question. Bondage labor is cheaper than any other—cheaper even than machinery. Besides, who would invest money in labor saving machines when he can lend it out at 200 or 300 per cent. per annum? So it comes to pass that landlords and usurers grow rich, cereals are exported and the peasants die. Hardly a year passes that parts of Russia are not devastated by local famine. Instances of anthropophagy often occur, the wretched peasants being reduced to such straits that in their desperation they eat human flesh—literally prey on each other.

INTERESTING FIGURES.  
In England when the mortality of a rural district exceeds twenty-three per thousand an official inquiry is ordered touching the cause of so abnormal a death rate. In Russia, alone of all countries, does the reverse obtain. In the thirteen central provinces of the empire the death rate in the rural districts is sixty-two per thousand as compared with a general rate of thirty-six per thousand. As in the same provinces the mean birth rate is forty-five per thousand, it follows that the population is diminishing at the rate of seventeen per thousand per year. The cause, as openly stated at a recent meeting of the Russian Society of Surgeons, under the presidency of Dr. Botkin, body servant to the emperor, is deficiency of bread—in other words, starvation—and this in the most fertile and productive part of the country, where cereals are grown largely for export. Where the earth yields its increase most bountifully, in fact, there death reaps its richest harvest.

And for all the misery and suffering which these figures denote, for the yearly destruction of half a million lives, the Russian government is primarily and solely responsible. It is the government that is driving the peasants by thousands under the Juggernaut wheels of koulaks, usurers and landlords, for it is to provide the wherewithal for paying the tax gatherer that the peasant borrows money and makes himself a slave. The tax gatherer has no mercy. Arrears are ruthlessly exacted, even in times of dearth. The man who fails to pay is first flogged and then sold out. And yet the peasants, with a faith which will be absurd if it were not pathetic, still believe in the goodness of their lord and master. To them the czar is still a semi-divine father, who would help them if he could, but whose good intentions on their behalf are continually thwarted by the malignity and incompetence of his agents.—For. San Francisco Chronicle.

What Explorer Stanley Has Done.  
The London common council recently voted resolution of thanks to Mr. H. M. Stanley, Mr. P. Morris and others on the occasion of "the arrival of the expedition on the Congo river to the native confederation under the flag and names of the international association. He was named as one of the delegates, being a technical councilor at the late Berlin conference, at the conclusion of which he explored regions of Africa (on which he had thrown light by his travels across the continent in 1874-75, and which he subsequently developed were recognized by the European powers as an independent state of the Congo. Eight years previously, Stanley, and 700 miles of caravan had been thrown open to commerce. At various places there were missionary settlements and schools in a fair state of progress. Trading companies, encouraged by the peaceful character of the country, had established themselves at Stanley Pool, and their steamers were exploiting this immense and fertile region.

There were now five lines of steamers running to the Congo per month, and a telegraphic cable was being laid along the west coast of Africa, which would reach the Congo settlement. Arrangements were being made for the construction of a railway to pass the cataracts, and if successful, the Congo basin would, on account of its great wealth, and variety of tropical climate, become a superior Brazil. From 1870 to 1884, when Mr. Stanley completed his labors, and brought the tremendous gorges by over four hundred native chiefs, there was not one shot fired; and, as the state had 1,100,000 square miles, inhabited by over 30,000,000 people, it had been a grand victory over barbarism without the guilt of blood that had too often stained the triumphs of civilizing enterprises. Mr. Stanley had received the thanks of the best learned societies of London, Paris, Vienna, New York, and it would be a fitting compliment if the corporation conferred upon him the freedom of the city for the great and everlasting "benefit he had conferred."

If it were possible to bottle the air there would be a great American Air Bottling association before sundown to-morrow, and millions would be allowed to die for want of a breath if they were unable to pay the monthly air bills.—Col. Bob Ingersoll.



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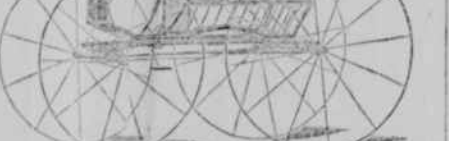
OFFICE CITY COLLECTOR,  
RICHMOND, November 20, 1886.  
THIS OFFICE WILL BE OPEN daily between the hours of 9 o'clock A. M. and 6 o'clock P. M., from the 15th to the 1st day of DECEMBER, 1886, INCLUSIVE.

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